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ABSTRACT

To explain Hestian feminism, named for Hestia, the Greek goddess of hearth and home, this paper examines six mainstream feminist perspectives to expose the dilemma of domesticity within feminism. A basic tenet of liberal feminism is the extension to women of the citizenship rights enjoyed by men, but Hestian feminism acknowledges that women may have either a domestic (Hestian) or a public (Hermean) orientation. Domestic, material, and cultural feminism explains how women historically have been domestically-oriented while they maintained their feminist perspectives. A re-examination of Marxism from the Hestian perspective provides an alternative view on the household and family. Radical feminism and Hestian feminism are compatible because both perspectives encourage making the private domain visible. The last perspective, socialist feminism, seeks to synthesis Marxism and radical feminism and provides a systematic way to reconceptualize the private domain. A 31-item bibliography is included. (DJC)

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by

Patricia J. Thompson

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
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HESTIAN FEMINISM

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Over the past two decades, the "women's liberation movement" has evolved into the "feminist movement," and "Women's Studies" has expanded to become "the new scholarship on women." A major challenge confronts the women who once sought to become "liberated." Problems -- both practical and theoretical -- have surfaced. Among these are family stress, gender-role strain and confusion, mismanagement of essential household resources, and concern over available and affordable quality care for infants, children, the handicapped and disabled, the ill, and the elderly. All of the issues are concerns of contemporary Home Economics, which views the family as an ecosystem -- a life-support system for its members. The household, family, and community are an ecological unit. The home is a "near environment" operated for its inhabitants' well-being and development. Home economists' fidelity to a "home and family" orientation baffles and frustrates those feminists who view the family as an oppressor of women. At the same time, both home economists and feminists seek alternatives to the burdensome tasks that continue to absorb a disproportionate share of women's time and energy. The unique concept of the family as an ecosystem and the reliance on systems

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thinking among many leading home economists are not generally understood by feminist scholars.

In this paper, I would like first to introduce the concept of Hestian feminism and then to review some of the major feminist positions to expose the "blind side" of feminism, namely the dilemma of domesticity.

HOME ECONOMICS AS HESTIAN FEMINISM

Jungian analyst Jean Shinoda Bolen and the French Canadian social psychologist Ginette Paris have both identified the ancient Greek goddess Hestia as an archetypal image helpful for developing feminist insights. In arriving at the essence of the Hestian archetype, we must strip -- or deconstruct -- aspects of representation and interpretation that reflect inherent masculist bias. In so doing, we can "connect" aspects of the "old" and "new" scholarship on women and make them more meaningful for *both* women and men.

The archaic meaning of *Hestia* was "hearthfire." The name of the goddess and the name of the fire were the same. The space (foyer) in which a Greek family's fire burned was sacred. The flame was sacred, too. We must appreciate the spiritual nature of the hearthkeeping ritual and the belief in the essential purity of the flame. The careful lighting and nurturing of the flame was symbolic of the nurturing of the family. The *oikos*, the private household sphere, was under Hestia's protection. The hearth was an area of reconciliation where the stranger was welcome among the members of the household. It was sacrilege to argue before the hearth.

Hestia's position among the Olympian gods was unique. She was the "first goddess," being the firstborn of Rhea (mother of the gods) and her

brother/husband Kronos (god of Time and father of the gods, i.e., "Father Time"). To foil a prophecy that foretold his overthrow by one of his children -- even as he himself had overthrown his father, Uranus -- Kronos swallowed his children. Hestia was first. To trick her husband, Rhea hid Zeus and gave Kronos a stone -- the *omphalos* -- to swallow instead. When Kronos disgorged his children, Hestia was last. Her position as "first and last" among the gods made her a "daughter of Time," a personification of cyclical "womantime" rather than linear, patriarchal time. She was honored in the recurring events of daily life, and prayers were raised to her at the beginning and end of ordinary private meals as well as at opulent public feasts. Hestia's symbol was the hearth -- fixed and immobile -- which was the spiritual center of the *oikos*, or household. Its fixity and immobility represented security and continuity, qualities essential for a settled human existence which required that the affairs of daily life be structured and ordered in predictable ways. Hestia was the personification of order in the conduct of everyday affairs related to the perennial problems of human life. She was the aunt of Hermes, protector of public space in the *polis*, with whom she is mythically paired. Hestia and Hermes are apt personifications of the basic spatial division of the private/public spheres (Vernant, 1982).

Hestia's attributes are not those of the powerful male. We can best grasp her importance if we strip away "masculist" categorical blinders and consider her significance with the "fresh eye" of feminist insight. Hestia chose not to marry, hence she was the "maiden aunt" of Zeus' "virgin" daughters, Athena and Artemis. Hestia was not male-defined; she was self-defined. She was self-centered but not "selfish." Hestia calls us

to create new definitions of the "female self" and its experience in the world. The dominant masculist paradigms define women by their sexual and procreative potential. Hestia was not a "mother" figure. She represents a different aspect of feminine humanity -- constancy and dependability, qualities essential for species survival and family stability. She was *there*. Everywhere. She was foremost in human consciousness, perhaps as a reminder of what life was like before humans settled in families and communities. Hestia's image was empowering, not overpowering, emancipating, not dominating.

Hestia's image opens possibilities for a new feminist logic that can confront the mind-binding dualisms imposed by a patriarchal logic categorized by "otherness" and "opposites." A feminist logic might classify along a more fluid continuum, perhaps even a "three-valued" logic. Such a continuum would return ends to beginnings and see an end implicit in the beginning, as in the processes of human life. It would recognize a complex set of reflexive feedback loops and cycles, in essence a "systems" perspective. Such logic would lead to respect for the interdependence of the natural and human environments.

LIBERAL FEMINISM

Modern (or mainstream) feminism is generally traced to the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) in which she extended the ideals of the Enlightenment to the female gender. Weren't women reasonable, rational, and objective? Could women share in the promise of egalitarianism and liberty? Even such a rare intellect and noble mind as Mary Wollstonecraft's, however, succumbed to the complications of childbirth. In 1797, she gave to the world a daughter who

became Mary Shelley -- creator of that enduring mythic monster, Frankenstein.

Donovan characterizes Wollstonecraft as a "rationalist and a Stoic who firmly believed that critical thinking can liberate the individual from the mindless repetition of mere physical existence, and that proper education could liberate women from subjugation to their conditioned role of serving men" (1985, p. 11). A basic tenet of Liberal Feminism is the extension to women of the rights of citizenship enjoyed by men.

Jaggar (1983) identified normative dualism, abstract individualism, and liberal rationality as distinguishing features of the "liberal" perspective (pp. 40-46). Each concept reflects a male bias in its view of human nature. Key ideas that must be examined from a feminist standpoint are equality, autonomy, and the concept of dual spheres. In ignoring biological need as a major aspect of human existence, liberal theorists create "disembodied" rights without accounting for "embodied" responsibilities. This has had disastrous effects with respect to meeting some fundamental human needs. For example, the organism-environment nexus has been conveniently subordinated to abstract ideals that (when reified) lead to ideas, actions, and policies that become increasingly remote from concrete human experience. This explains the frequent failure of "liberal" social policy and the heavy cost of such failure in human terms.

According to Jaggar:

> No adequate philosophical theory of human need can ignore the facts of human biology; our common need for air, water, food, warmth, etc. Far from being irrelevant to political philosophy, these facts must form its starting point. (p. 42)

I believe that a genuine liberal perspective is more than the starting point of a feminist political philosophy. It also provides a way of thinking about the human condition that involves a critique of long-held assumptions that conveniently omit an "embodied" perspective on both human nature and the natural world. An "embodied" perspective would introduce the differing standpoints of a "masculist" and a "feminist" experience of the world. A feminist deconstruction must reject any philosophy premised on acceptance of the collective male perspective as though it were universally "human." Unfortunately, this perspective has distorted some areas of feminist thinking. For this reason I have tried to develop an approach that can free us from the "false consciousness" of a system of ideas developed under patriarchy that still holds us in its thrall -- even as we try to free ourselves from its "mind-binding" limitations.

Hestian feminism replaces normative dualism with a comprehensive perspective that accommodates "twoness" in a different way. Thus it goes beyond gender in acknowledging that both men and women can have a Hestian *or* a Hermean orientation. It also shows the importance of extending rational problem-solving to the Hestian domain.

DOMESTIC, MATERIAL, AND CULTURAL FEMINISM

In the United States, the strong humanitarian currents of the 19th century supported two major social movements -- for the emancipation of slaves and the emancipation of women. Prominent sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimke and Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe held widely different views on the same issues. Beecher's *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism with Reference to the Duty of American Women* was published in 1837. Whereas the Grimke sisters linked the cause of

women's rights with abolitionism, Catharine Beecher advocated a coalescence of American culture around a new image of politically transcendant womanhood. The London World Anti-Slavery Convention was held in 1840, and, in the following year, Catharine published *The Treatise on Domestic Economy*. In it she set forth her version of the morally uplifting potential of the domestic sphere.

According to Sklar (1973):

> Catharine's vision of a world of morally superior women was forged against the reality of the male operated system of political rights .... (p. 132)

Beecher represents a paradox in the feminist canon because she was a woman of superior intellect who did not regard suffrage as the panacea for the ills that plagued women. For our purposes, it was her concern for the improvement of the material conditions of the household and the strengthening of the family unit -- especially for the protection of children -- that must be reconciled with mainstream feminism. Beecher's solution to the degradation of women and the abuse of children was to make the wife and mother the "minister of the home," i.e., to compel attention for the "moral voice" of women as the shapers of the coming generation.

In Sklar's view:

> Catharine Beecher's ... ideology of domesticity ... revived the Puritan notion of the subjection of the individual to the larger social welfare, yet it presented this notion in a form acceptable to the nineteenth century. In this democratic context the home was a much more effective agency of social authority than the clergy or aristocracy. For in the delineation of its own lines of authority the family relied on 'natural' relationships of superiority and subordination. As a society in miniature, the family could therefore be used as a model for the extension of such relationships elsewhere in

society. (pp. 163-164)

Beecher's views were grounded in a moral philosophy informed by her reading of Christian theology. She had shown this bent in her first book, *The Elements of Mental and Moral Philosophy, Founded Upon Experience, Reason, and the Bible* (1831). Her perspective had political implications because it was intended to reduce conflict and contribute to the equilibrium of the wider social body.

A similar note appears in the works of Emily Dickinson whose poems reflect a raised woman's consciousness of her own being. Her texts are rebukes to male dominant imagery and interpretive canons. Dickinson also did not support the campaign for women's rights and her genius thrived in domestic isolation. She was a woman centered in her self, her near environment, and the evocations of divinity she sensed in Nature. Her prose "surrounds domesticity with ideas of temptation, Christ, sin.... (Paulin, 1988, p. 23).

According to Prescott, Jane Austen's "was a life of determined domesticity, circumscribed and dull.... She lived with her mother and her sister, playing her piano daily, taking pride in her sewing, and guarding her privacy as closely as she could" (1988, p. 62). She wrought from this ordinary experience novels of extraordinary insight, interest, and lasting appeal. Reviews of contemporary literary works also reveal a tension between the "facts" of women's lives and the standards for successful "fiction" centering on these lives. In reviewing Marilyn French's *Her Mother's Daughter*, Susannah Clapp (1987) observes:

> [French] has written a novel which aims to show that looking after a household and children is not 'frivolous and mindless', a novel which speaks of domestic procedures rather than

> public actions, and which deals in fates rather than destinies. The apparent eventlessness of large parts of her tract carries some compulsion. We are given detailed accounts of mashing meatballs, frying potatoes and pickling cucumbers. We are taken through the scrubbing, wringing, the bluing and the pegging out of washing. We are supplied with a comprehensive breakdown of household budgets. In hefty doses these are laborious: we don't want to read only about what we're accustomed to doing. In small doses they offer the fascination of seeing habitual actions as complicated activities -- the peculiar fascination of seeing our own house on television. (p. 13)

Feminists today (as in the past) have difficulty dealing with women whose perspective on Hestian activities seems to raise the trivial to levels of intense personal meaning. This perspective led some to oppose (or at least choose not to support) women's suffrage. Many leaders of the movement for women's rights struggled with the tug-of-war between the demands of private and public life. In time, suffrage became the single most important issue in the mind-set of many who sought ways to improve the condition of women. The same view has been retrojected to past time and made the measure by which women historically have been judged as within/outside the category "feminist." This was the case with Catharine Beecher, in whose view education could provide an avenue for single women to emancipate themselves from economic dependency on men. Educated mothers were also their children's teachers. Thus education that related knowledge to the Hestian sphere would have value -- not only to the women themselves but to the children they raised and hence ultimately it benefited the entire Nation. Beecher has been labeled a "domestic feminist," a label invented outside the intellectual tradition of domestic science that Beecher brought to public view with publication of the *Treatise*. The label characterizes Beecher not by what she chose to advocate but by what she chose *not* to advocate. That view must be

reexamined.

It is possible to be both a feminist and a home economist! Because Hestia was the Greek goddess of "hearth and home" I call this perspective on women and society "Hestian." It defines the consistent and coherent perspective of some women -- including poets and novelists -- that is located not in the "public" but in the "private" world. Women and men with a Hestian orientation direct their energy, intelligence, and creativity toward meeting everyday needs ethically and esthetically, improving household functions, empowering individuals and families, and preserving the environment to assure the health and well-being of the Hestian sphere.

MARXISM AND FEMINISM

Strictly speaking, there is no "Marxist feminism." Marx, the patriarch, did not give much thought to women and the family while Jenny Marx and her children struggled to obtain warmth, shelter, food, and health care. In Marxist theory, the concept of class is the key to understanding all social phenomena. Marxist theory views human biology and human society not as dualistically distinct but as dialectically related. By this Marx means that each is not conceptually independent but so related that each partially constitutes the other (Jaggar, p. 55). The Hestian/Hermean domains exist in dialectical relation.

According to Marx:

> In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. (Marx, 1852; cited in Donovan, 1985, p. 67.)

Marx thus politicized the family and blurred its particularistic

significance in human life. In 1846 he noted that "The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production" (Marx, 1846; cited in Donovan, p. 67). Marx never fully explained how the material conditions of human life were meliorated by *praxis*, by which he meant the free, creative engagement in the world by the individual who both changes the material conditions of life and is changed by the experience -- thus changing the world. Part of this problem lies in the inadequate theoretical foundation for the concept of the "division of labor" which was presumed to be based on gender rather than on a culturally identified complex of activities essential for human survival. I characterize these essential activities as "Hestian." Women -- historically and cross-culturally -- have assumed the major burdens of Hestian labor, i.e., the private or "domestic" domain involving both kinship relations and essential household activities. The two are not identical. However, they are often conflated -- thus further exacerbating the "dilemma of domesticity."

Work in the Hermean domain -- both wage earning and political activity -- takes place outside the domain associated with Hestian work. Hestian and Hermean activity must be conceptualized as dialectically related to human praxis. The two realms -- the Hestian (private/familial) and Hermean (public/political) exist in dialectical relation.

Conscious life activity distinguishes human praxis from the life activity of animals. Unlike animals, humans can step back from the world. They can plan and shape the environment to accommodate their current and future needs, interests, and desires. Praxis, or "practical action," can offset the dehumanizing experience of alienated labor, i.e., work whose

outcome is not related to the worker's goal, but to some "outside" oppressive demand. Thus the disproportionate amount of Hestian labor allocated to women in the household has its counterpart in the dehumanized organization of labor in the capitalistic workplace which separates "paid" (hence "valued") work from the "unpaid" (hence "devalued") work done in households and families.

Women, whose disproportionate investment of time and energy in Hestian labor has profoundly changed the quality of human life, have had their work deprecated and devalued in the Hermean domain. Hestian work is essential work. It is human work. It is not gendered work. The reasons for the disproportionate share of Hestian work being done by women is, of course, influenced by their collective powerlessness under patriarchy. It should be noted that anyone who does Hestian work -- male or female -- is likely to be devalued, underpaid, or not paid at all. In fact, the reason for the existence of slaves and other oppressed classes is the disinclination of those with power, prestige, and privilege to do their own Hestian work or to respect those who do it for them. Hestian work is defined by its relation to individual and species survival. It is at one and the same time productive *and* reproductive.

A reexamination of Marxism from a Hestian perspective provides an alternative view on the household and family, the private and the public, and also on human-environment interrelationships.

RADICAL FEMINISM

Jaggar (1983) states that Radical Feminism, a 20th-century phenomenon, reflects new options for sexual expression and sexual control. It joins the "women's liberation" and "sexual liberation"

movements of the New Left as they developed in the 1960's and 1970's. Writes Jaggar:

> although the drudgery of women's traditional work had long been acknowledged, not until the 20th century did the possibility of minimizing and perhaps even abolishing the burden of women's traditional responsibility for childbearing and childrearing come to be recognized. (p. 83)

Radical feminism raged against "sexual politics," recognizing and resisting the sexual domination and exploitation of women by men. Radical feminists argue that perceptions of gender structure every aspect of women's lives -- often so subtly and invidiously that they go unrecognized, undetected, and unchallenged. Furthermore:

> Radical feminism argues that gender is not the only way in which women are differentiated socially from men; they see it also as a way in which women are subordinated to men. The genders are not "different but equal." Instead, gender is an elaborate system of male domination. The theoretical task of radical feminism is to understand that system; its political task is to end it. (Jaggar, 1983, p. 85)

Radical feminists contrast women's ways of understanding with "patriarchal ways of knowing" the world (Jaggar, p. 96). In the radical feminist view, patriarchal thinking imposes polarities on reality. Inherent in the concept of dualism under patriarchy is the specification of "superior" and "inferior" modes of existence and expression. This is especially invidious when comparisons are made between the sexes. Patriarchy separates what is organically and psychically connected and interjects domination and control. Where the Hestian mode emphasizes connectedness, the Hermean mode emphasizes "divide and conquer." A distinctive contribution of Radical Feminism is to make the invisible

visible. That is precisely what the Hestian/Hermean model permits. The invisible world of the private domain must become as clear and comprehensible as it is possible for intelligence to make it, but it must also be clearly distinguished from the visible, public domain.

Part of the "reality" disclosed by a Hestian/Hermean lens of analysis is that the private/public systems are not boundaried ineluctably by gender but by patriarchally conditioned perceptions of space, speech, and human activity that were codified under patriarchy. The two systems exist in dialectic relation -- not the single patriarchally defined "reality" postulated since classical times as inevitable. The sex-role system is not unchanging, nor is it a constant in all times and all cultures. Nevertheless, it is true that where rigid sex role systems exist, women are disadvantaged. It is also true that in societies where the Hestian system is neglected and its interests subordinated to patriarchal privilege, the society as a whole is at risk, with women and children suffering most cruelly.

If, in fact, the "material interests" of the species are identical for males and females, then it is also possible to throw off the shackles of patriarchal thinking and to define a world that takes both "traditional" and "radical" standpoints into account. Since Radical Feminism also challenges "compulsory heterosexuality," it affords a way to reveal long-repressed attitudes toward human sexuality in the explanatory paradigms of patriarchy. Andrea Dworkin (1974) makes the point that we must stop attempting to categorize all human beings into one or another of two discrete biological sexes because this ontology distorts the reality that human beings exhibit a wide variety of cross-sexed biological and

behavioral traits. She writes: "*We are clearly a multisexed species which has its sexuality spread along a vast fluid continuum where the elements called male and female are not discrete.*" (p. 193; emphasis in original.)

Although Radical Feminism is -- for many women and men -- the most discomfiting of the mainstream feminist perspectives, it has served to shatter many "taken-for-granted" or "commonsense" assumptions about gender, everyday experience, and social relations. At the extreme, radical feminists advocate "sexual separatism" and a "Lesbian nation." By following such a path, it is clear that the strategies of the patriarchal oppressor would be coopted by the matriarchal emancipators. However, since a basic strategy of this feminist perspective is renaming reality, should not the inheritors of the "domestic mantle" be allowed to "name themselves"? To the extent that radical feminist critiques have demonstrated the inherent male bias in the patriarchal paradigms used to define and describe human nature and human experience, it would seem a fundamental goal of feminist theory to seek some "self-defining" way out of the conceptual traps of patriarchy. At the same time, "man hating" seems another form of "self hating" if, as many radical feminists accept, all human beings exist on a sexually fluid continuum and possess androgynous traits. It is also possible that the sexual continuum fluctuates over the human life cycle, with the same person subject to more or less of the sex-specific hormones at different times in life. This may also explain the way middle-aged people of both sexes appropriate some of the gender traits of the "opposite" sex as they grow older.

SOCIALIST FEMINISM

Socialist Feminism is also a daughter of the contemporary women's

movement (Jaggar, 1983, p. 123). As stated by Jaggar, "A defining feature of socialist feminism is that it attempts to interpret the historical materialist method of traditional Marxism so that it applies to the issues made visible by radical feminists" (p. 124). In seeking a synthesis of Marxism and Radical Feminism, socialist feminists endeavor to develop new political and economic categories in order to reconceptualize both the private and public spheres of life (Jaggar, p. 124). The link between women's oppression, patriarchy, and capitalism is a major theme in socialist feminist writing. A part of the socialist feminist critique of Marx and Engels is Marxism's failure to provide symmetrical attention to the human needs for food, shelter, and clothing, on the one hand, and to sexual, childbearing and childrearing needs, on the other (Jaggar, p. 129). Interestingly, these areas have provided the focal points for the organization of knowledge in domestic science and Home Economics. However, without adjusting the lens of analysis to bring into focus the programmatic regularities that occur in the Hestian domain, socialist feminists continue presenting distorted views on what occurs there, as well as on the involvement of home economists in these areas. According to Jaggar:

> On the socialist feminist view, there is considerable historical variation in the systems through which people have attempted to fulfill the need for children. The same is true of the ways in which people have organized to satisfy their needs for sexual and emotional satisfaction. Just as human needs for food, shelter and clothing assume specific form through the means available to satisfy them, so too the needs for children, for sexual satisfaction and for emotional nurturance undergo a continuous historical process of transformation. (1983, p. 135.)

I submit that the Hestian/Hermean paradigm offers a consistent and

systematic way by which the organization of material existence and the organization of human relationships (sexual and kinship) in various cultures and over time can be examined, explored, and understood. It also affords a means by which feminist theory and the rapidly proliferating new scholarship on women can be synthesized and communicated across disciplinary boundaries.

REFLECTION

In the early years of the feminist movement, there was a general resistance to everything that might sound "old fashioned." There was a kind of emotion-driven backlash that rejected anything that appeared to constitute a delimitation on women's unrealized potential. Liberal feminists sought to establish women's "rights" within the same legal and judicial frameworks that had been won by men. Hidden in this quest was a "subversive" element. The standards used to define "equality," "access," and "success" were based on a male model. For a time, "fear of success" was offered as an explanation for women's failure to "measure up." Data were generated on women's access to areas of advanced education -- law, medicine, engineering, the sciences -- where men had predominated in the past. Males gave way reluctantly. Women worthies -- those who had been the "first" to break down the barriers based on sex -- were identified in virtually every field. At the same time, there was no compensatory dash of men into fields of study previously dominated by women -- nursing, elementary education, and Home Economics, for example. Indeed, the fact that women continued to find these fields of interest was perceived by some as a serious lack or shortcoming in women's aspirations that could be explained by "socialization."

Women scholars initiated a pervasive critique of the disciplines of knowledge. The humanities (history, literature, languages, philosophy), the social sciences (cultural anthropology, sociology, social psychology), and eventually even the "hard" sciences were examined for evidence of inherent masculist bias. During this time, a wide range of objections and challenges to previously accepted "dogma" were sustained, and the "new scholarship" was born. Significantly, Home Economics was "outside" this energetic inquiry into the relation of women to nature, culture, and knowledge. It was as if it did not exist. It survived a considerable amount of feminist insult and indifference. After two decades -- over a generation, now -- it is clear that the "new woman" is still a woman -- and the "old boys" are still the "boys." Perhaps it is time to reflect on some of the ideas of the new scholarship and to see where they may fit with some earlier work done by and for women within Home Economics. When viewed through a lens ground by patriarchy, Home Economics appears "odd," and (like the everyday events it deals with) it is easy to dismiss appearance for substance.

Many themes from feminist theory and the new scholarship interface with Home Economics, a discipline that has maintained a consistent focus on such things as household management, the material conditions (food, clothing, and shelter) of everyday life, and those complex factors that influence individual and family life cycle development. By its own definition, Home Economics is a study of *relation*. The subjects on which it depends are concerned with *events* and *phenomena*. Home Economics was meant "to connect and bind together into a consistent whole the pieces of knowledge at present unrelated" (Fourth Lake Placid Conference,

1902, pp. 70-71). This standpoint can now connect events and phenomena brought to light through the new feminist scholarship. Hestian feminism speaks to experiences that are both mystical and mundane. It speaks to the fragility of the natural and the social order, and to the necessity of maintaining our two spheres -- the private (Hestian) and public (Hermean) -- not in destructive, static tension but in dynamic equilibrium.

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